

DPAC Screens Pornographic, Anti-Catholic Films

Movies include Conclave, Babygirl

ABBY STRELOW
Staff Writer

The DeBartolo Performing Arts Center’s (DPAC) Browning Cinema at Notre Dame has recently screened a number of films containing sexually explicit and anti-Catholic content, including controversial films such as *Conclave*, *Babygirl*, and *The Apprentice*.

The films were ticketed and open to the public, with discounted prices for students.

Conclave, a 2024 film directed by Edward Berger, tells the story of the fictional Cardinal Lawrence, who is tasked with leading a conclave to select a new pope. After navigating the conspiracies, corruption, and scandals of many of the cardinals, the conclave finally selects an intersex pope who “identifies as male” but is ultimately revealed to have female chromosomes.

The film’s portrayal of the Catholic Church and its controversial ending have caused many Catholics to condemn it. Bishop Robert Barron of the Winona-Rochester diocese advised Catholics to “run away from it as fast as you can,” saying, “If you are interested



Image from DeBartolo Performing Arts Center



in a film about the Catholic Church that could have been written by the editorial board of the *New York Times*, this is your movie.”

Bp. Barron continued in his description of *Conclave*: “The hierarchy of the Church is [portrayed as] a hotbed of ambition, corruption and desperate egotism. Conservatives are xenophobic extremists and the liberals are self-important schemers. None can escape this irredeemable

situation. The only way forward is the embrace of the progressive buzz words of diversity, inclusion, indifference to doctrine, and the ultimate solution is a virtue signaling cardinal who takes the papal name of Innocent and who is a biological female.”

Notre Dame Provost John McGreevy, who attended DPAC’s screening of *Conclave*, told the *Rover*, “I have an interest in the history of Catholicism, so that drew me

here to see *Conclave*. It was an entertaining movie with great acting—even if the plot is rather implausible—and it had great atmospherics. I enjoyed it.”

Another film in the Browning Cinema’s season was *Babygirl*, screened from February 6–8 in partnership with the Gender Studies Program. DPAC’s description of the film states that it intends to embody “the spirit of 1980s and 1990s erotic thrillers.”

Babygirl tells the story of

a high-level CEO, Romy Mathis, who risks her family and career for an affair with a much younger intern. The film contains, according to reviews, “extremely long, graphic sexual scenes,” “consensually unclear moments,” extensive nudity, homosexual relationships, and instances of masturbation and pornography.

Following the Friday night showing of *Babygirl*, the Gender Studies Program sponsored a panel discussion led by Anna Wald, a Gender Studies Program Postdoctoral Fellow, and Bettina Spencer, St. Mary’s College Professor of Psychology and Gender and Women’s Studies.

When asked in the discussion about the film’s choice to include graphic and violent sexual scenes, Spencer said, “I think this movie is about, in many ways, sexual anxiety, and I think in that sense, we do need to see the sex scenes in this film, honestly. So this is about [Romy] not being honest with herself, not being honest with her partner, of a really long time figuring out what she likes, and we’re kind of with her on that journey.”

continued on pg. 5

Appellate Court Unanimously Affirms Dismissal of Kay Lawsuit

Indiana Court of Appeals affirms dismissal of “meritless,” “retaliatory” case brought by Keough School professor

EDITORIAL BOARD

Originally published on February 5, 2025.

An Indiana court of appeals affirmed St. Joseph Superior Court’s original dismissal of the defamation case brought by Professor Tamara Kay against the *Irish Rover*, on January 30, 2025.

The appellate court decision states: “The designated evidence established as a matter of law that The *Irish Rover* acted in good faith and in reasonable basis in law and fact. Therefore, the trial court properly dismissed Dr. Kay’s complaint under Indiana’s Anti-SLAPP statute. Here, we agree with the trial court that the undisputed facts established

that The *Irish Rover*’s two articles were written in good faith and that the alleged defamatory statements were not false.”

In October of 2022, the *Rover* reported on Kay’s public statements “advocating for abortion legalization” and her offers to help procure abortifacients. The *Rover* also covered Kay’s March 2023 lecture to the Notre Dame College Democrats on “her career, activism, and research on access to abortion.” Kay filed suit for alleged defamation in May 2023. The *Rover* responded with a motion to dismiss under Indiana’s Anti-SLAPP Law, which provides “a framework to distinguish between frivolous

and meritorious cases.”

In January 2024, the Court granted the *Rover*’s motion to dismiss, finding, “The alleged defamatory statements were true, within the meaning of the law, not made with actual malice, did not contain a defamatory inference, and there were no damages that were causally linked to The *Irish Rover* Articles.”

Under Indiana’s Anti-SLAPP provisions, legal fees may be awarded to defendants. Following the trial court’s decision, Kay was ordered to pay the *Rover*’s attorney’s fees.

Subsequently, Kay filed an appeal in February 2024.

continued on pg. 4

Notre Dame Theology: Elite and Excellent

Professor highlights ranking, growth, orthodoxy

CALEB VAUGHAN
Campus Editor

For a university that prides herself on academic prestige, Notre Dame’s highest ranked department, theology, often flies under the radar. For two of the past four years, Notre Dame has been ranked first in theology, often above institutions like Harvard, Cambridge, and Yale.

Father Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C. wrote in 1962, “The Catholic university must strive mightily to understand the philosophical and theological dimensions of the modern problems that face man today.” He continued, “It goes without saying that the Catholic

university cannot fulfill this essential function in our day unless it develops departments of philosophy and theology as competent as its departments of history, physics and mathematics.”

The theology department—boasting current faculty such as John Cavadini, Jean Porter, Gary Anderson, Ulrich Lehner, and Cyril O’Regan, recipient of the prestigious Ratzinger Prize—upholds this “essential function.”

Undergraduates interested in theology can choose from two majors, three minors, or a supplemental major. The majors include theology and a joint theology-philosophy

continued on pg. 5



THE IRISH ROVER

WWW.IRISHROVER.NET

STAFF

Editor-in-Chief Michael Canady

Publisher Eddie Giuntini
Executive Editor Bridgette Rodgers
Managing Editor Lucy Spence
Layout Manager Kateri Castillo
Websmasters William White
 Harrison Barkley
Social Media Coordinator Sofia Fair

Campus Editors Clare DiFranco
 Caleb Vaughan
Culture Editor Elizabeth Mitchell
Politics Editor Sam Marchand
Religion Editor Danny Martin
Humor Editor James Whitaker

FACULTY ADVISORS

John Cavadini,
Professor of Theology
 Margot Cleveland,
Adjunct Instructor of Accounting
 Martijn Cremers,
Dean of the Mendoza College of Business
 Kirk Doran,
Associate Professor of Economics
 Father Terry Ehrman, C.S.C.,
Professor of Theology
 Sherif Girgis,
Associate Professor of Law
 Laura Hollis,
Professor of Accounting
 Father Bill Miscamble C.S.C.,
Professor of History
 Vincent Muñoz,
Professor of Political Science
 Walter Nicgorski,
Professor Emeritus, Program of Liberal Studies
 Dave O'Connor,
Professor of Philosophy
 Daniel Philpott,
Professor of Political Science
 Nicholas Teh,
Professor of Philosophy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mary Frances Devlin, ND '22
 Sophia Martinson, ND '18
 Tim Bradley, ND '16
 Claire Cousino, ND '12
 Alexandra DeSanctis Marr, ND '16
 Gabby Girgis, ND '12
 Mary Daly Korson, ND '10
 Jonathan Liedl, ND '11
 Joe Lindsley, ND '05
 Michael Logue, ND '16
 Zef Crnkovich, ND '22

The Irish Rover is a 501(c)(3) organization.

THE FINE PRINT

Founded in 2003, the *Irish Rover* is an independent, Catholic newspaper published fortnightly by students of the University of Notre Dame du Lac, and, as such, it receives no funding or official recognition from the University. Indeed, the ideas presented herein are not necessarily those of the University, although they probably should be.

The *Rover* was established by Notre Dame students who desired a strong and organized conservative voice on campus with the primary purpose of keeping the University true to its founding mission as a Roman Catholic institution. The *Rover* seeks to facilitate part of what the University's mission statement desires in its community: "a forum where through free inquiry and open discussion the various lines of Catholic thought may intersect with all the forms of knowledge found in the arts, sciences, professions, and every other area of human scholarship and creativity." To provide this forum, the *Rover* offers a distinctive kind of coverage that includes campus news, religion, politics, culture, history, and humor.

Out of civility, the *Rover* will not critically mention names of students, professors, or administrators, unless the person is either a well-known member of the community, or he or she has openly sought publicity. Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the *Rover's* Editorial Board, while content in individual columns represents the views of each respective author and should not be construed as representing the views of the entire staff. All comments and questions regarding the *Rover's* policies and editorial content, as well as Letters to the Editor, may be directed to the Editor-in-Chief, Michael Canady, at NDIrishRover@gmail.com or PO Box 46 Notre Dame IN 46556. These letters may be printed anonymously, upon request. Also, please visit our website www.irishrover.net, where you can peruse archives and subscribe to the paper.

“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.”
– 1 Corinthians 6:18



Image by Matt Cashore

University-Sponsored Porn

BRIDGETTE RODGERS

Executive Editor



Last weekend, Notre Dame students had the opportunity to spend their Friday night watching university-sponsored porn. At the on-campus movie theater.

The DeBartolo Performing Arts Center's (DPAC) Browning Cinema screened the pornographic film *Babygirl*, an “erotic thriller” detailing the collapse of a woman's family and career after her affair with a much younger intern. As reported by the *Rover*, “The film contains, according to reviews, ‘extremely long, graphic sexual scenes,’ ‘consensually unclear moments,’ extensive nudity, homosexual relationships, and instances of masturbation and pornography.”

Babygirl was co-presented by the Gender Studies Program and open to the public.

Aside from this scandal, the university's record hasn't been spotless, to say the least. The last decade has seen a consistent

willingness from the university to excuse depraved immorality under the name of academic freedom and expression.

Starting in 2019, Fr. Jenkins rejected a student-led petition to install a campus-wide pornography filter. It happened again in 2023.

Last year, a coalition of departments hosted a drag show, also in DPAC, as part of a class titled “What a Drag: Drag on Screen—Variations and Meanings.” After students, parents, faculty, and alumni expressed outrage, the Office of the President responded via email, citing “academic freedom.” It stated, “We defend this freedom even when the content of the presentation is objectionable to some or even many. The event you reference is part of a one-credit course in Film, Television, and Theatre on the history of drag, and the principle of academic freedom applies.”

And now, pornographic films are shown at the campus performing arts center—a venue regularly attended by students, faculty, and families of Notre Dame, as well as members of the South Bend community.

This doesn't seem to be a delivery of the university's commitment to educating the “mind, body, and spirit” of every Notre Dame student.

Let's be clear. *Babygirl*—as well as several other explicit films of the season—was

pornographic. Merriam-Webster defines pornography as “the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church writes clearly on this topic:

“Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials.”

At a university, particularly a Catholic one, conversations about the truth can, and should abound. Academic freedom is not the enemy of Catholic doctrine; in fact, a Catholic university's openness to Faith and Reason makes it especially suited to pursue Truth. So why can't sexually explicit movies be defended under academic freedom?

The purpose of genuine academic freedom is a discovery of and adherence to the truth.

This film is completely alien to the search for truth that we aspire to as a Catholic university. In her Mission Statement, Notre Dame pledges to protect this academic freedom, but places a caveat: “The University welcomes all areas of scholarly activity as consonant with its mission, subject to appropriate critical refinement.” If pornographic films aren't “subject to appropriate critical refinement,” then nothing is.

This blatant disregard for Church teaching must end. If the Catholic Church teaches that civil authorities have a responsibility to prohibit pornography in society, then Notre Dame holds an even greater duty. We ask that Fr. Dowd and his administration immediately end the exposure of students to pornographic and dehumanizing material. We've had enough.

Bridgette Rodgers is a junior studying political science and theology. You can contact her at brodger4@nd.edu.



True Men Keeping the Faith: 25 Years On

Notre Dame men should take up a special responsibility

FR. BILL MISCAMBLE, C.S.C.
Faculty Advisor

A mere quarter century ago, I published a simple book entitled *Keeping the Faith, Making a Difference*. It was a collection of various talks and homilies I had given during the decade of the 1990s. The book treated some rather basic ideas and practices in Christian belief and life, and it was aimed primarily at Catholic college students and recent graduates. I initially addressed some important aspects of Christian faith and discipleship, and am glad to report that I devoted a chapter to the Real Presence. I also addressed a number of more personal issues that had been raised to me by students back in that long-ago era. I did my best to offer some useful counsel on topics such as friendship, love and sex, marriage, and facing suffering.

One of my favorites among those chapters was entitled “True Men.” Reading over the essay in light of all that has taken place in these past 25 years reveals a certain “period piece” quality to it. (Few priests reference *Saving Private Ryan* or *The Simpsons* these days!) But in that far-away time, I aimed to contest the negative portrayal of men in the broad culture as “either immature, manipulative, and cruel, or as weak and superfluous.” I also tried to counter a broader sense that masculinity had become eviscerated and stripped of connotations of strength and goodness.

Rather predictably, I suppose, I offered Christian manhood as a counter, suggesting that true men discovered their best selves

by adopting a life of service and responsibility. They could only unlock their true and best self by discerning how they must live for others. My brief essay on Christian manhood had a rather limited impact, although perhaps it was of some benefit to those of my former students who chose to read it. Nonetheless, as one looks over the landscape of the past quarter-century, one cannot help but notice that confusion still prevails regarding what authentic manhood should mean.

I had no sense of the challenges that Internet technology and, in particular the blight of online pornography, would present to young men back in 2000, when *Keeping the Faith* was published. I didn’t discern well how guys would be burdened with anxieties about making firm commitments and entering into true and loving relationships. Obviously, I had no idea that there would be all kinds of false and sometimes damaging “answers” provided to aid young men to reach a certain maturity. I hardly keep up with such movements as the “New Stoicism” or the repugnant “influencer” Andrew Tate and his ilk. Yet, it saddens me when I hear that young men turn to such guidance (if it can be called that). Obviously there have been better and more constructive voices, such as that of Jordan Peterson, coming to the aid of young men and calling them to take responsibility for their actions. But there is a certain limit to what even such a thoughtful guide as Peterson can offer.

Dare I suggest as I now enter into my “recalibration years” here on campus that the

thoughts I offered 25 years ago might still have some relevance for today? Then, I submitted that college is the arena in which young males can grow into being men, or decide not to. We know well that there are “demons and dragons,” addictions and temptations of various sorts, that lie in wait for young men during their college years. They are, of course, much more subtle than fighting either wild beasts or ugly monsters, as in classic tales. But they are just as dangerous and they must be wrestled with and defeated. At a school like Notre Dame, young men must take advantage of the opportunities to strengthen their character and to exercise those practices that exemplify a true man—telling the truth, discerning what is right and courageously doing it, standing up for the weaker ones, going to the aid of those in need. They must learn well especially about respecting women and moving beyond the callous behavior that treats young women as mere sexual objects.

In order to do this, a man must not only rely on himself; he must deepen his brotherhood with other good men and rely on the encouragement and example of true men who can lead the way. Most of all, a Christian man must deepen his relationship with the Lord. Too often at Notre Dame, men can treat their religious practice as something like an avocation—something that brings one to the chapel for a nice Mass on a Sunday night—but true men will move beyond a superficial attachment to their faith and follow the Lord at a deeper level, understanding well that this will at times involve the cross.

True Christian men are needed more than ever in our challenging times which are so dominated by the forces of materialism, individualism and secularism. Regrettably, there can be a tendency after graduates leave Notre Dame for them to drift away from their practice of the faith. But beyond Notre Dame, young, faith-filled Catholic men are needed to boldly bear witness to the truths that may be unpopular among those who control the levers of cultural power, but which are essential for a decent and good society. My hope and prayer, of course, is that Notre Dame men will be especially willing to stand strong in fighting for what is right and good.

As I look back over my decades of teaching at Notre Dame, I am glad to report that I know many such good Notre Dame men, who are now married and building families of their own and helping contribute in their communities. The world needs more of them, to be sure. But I sense positive developments on our campus and we should acknowledge and give thanks for them. On a more personal level, we have the example of the courageous *Rover* editors who stood strong for the truth in their reporting, despite being subjected to a lawsuit. On a broader level, I am impressed with the high participation in men’s hall retreats and the desire they reveal for participants to deepen and strengthen their faith. Such men realize that we are all engaged in a battle of sorts and that our true calling is a demanding one. Christian manhood is all about heroic self-giving in order to provide for those who depend on you

or will depend on you—your own family, your community, your church, and your society.

Real men at Notre Dame should take up a special responsibility of preparing themselves to be good husbands and fathers. In doing so, they will truly be making a valuable contribution in our society. Good husbands and fathers are desperately needed in our times. As Ryan Anderson, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center (and also a wonderful husband and father), wrote recently in *First Things*, “The root cause of virtually all of our social problems is the collapse of marriage and family following the sexual revolution.” In shaping a good society, hopefully much can be done on a broader level with a re-emphasis on building up the family as the key unit of society, as Vice President J. D. Vance recommended in his talk at the March for Life rally. But strong families will only result if there is a good man ready to serve as a devoted husband and father. Preparing for these crucial roles should be as important for Notre Dame men as attending to their course of studies. The need for such men has only grown during these past 25 years. But it is the men who truly keep the faith who, in the end, will make all the difference.

Fr. Bill Miscamble, C.S.C. is a professor emeritus in the Department of History and serves on the *Rover’s* faculty advisory board.

Stay connected with the *Irish Rover* online!



The Irish Rover

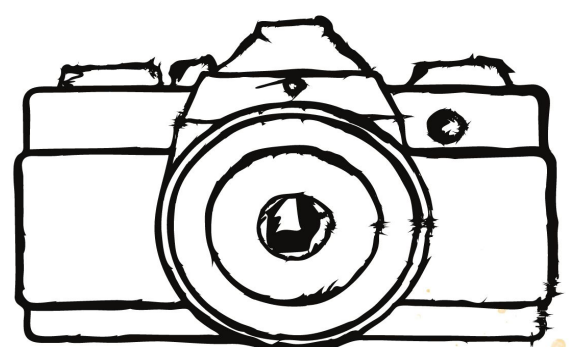


@irishrovernd



@irishrovernd

If you are interested in
joining the *Irish Rover*
photography team, contact
ndirishrover@gmail.com





Lawsuit Dismissed *continued from front*

The unanimous appellate court opinion, written by Judge Paul Mathias, with Judges Elaine Brown and Dana Kenworthy concurring, rejects Kay's argument, affirming that the *Rover* published the articles "in good faith and with reasonable basis in law and fact."

The judges continue: "The *Irish Rover* based its information

on reliable sources, particularly as the source for most of the information was gleaned from Dr. Kay's own statements, her social media, and publications."

Judge Mathias cited Kay's statements in the wake of Indiana's 2022 law prohibiting abortion access. Kay wrote on Twitter: "Such a devastating day to be a woman in IN. But women faculty @NotreDame are organizing. We are here (as private citizens, not

representatives of ND) to help you access healthcare when you need it, & we are prepared in every way. Look for the '[.]' Spread the word to students!"

The judges also noted that Kay "tweeted links to organizations providing Plan B and Plan C abortifacient pills."

The judges cited Indiana's description of anti-SLAPP law when affirming the dismissal of the defamation suit. The opinion stated that, when faced

with "meritless retaliatory SLAPP lawsuits designed to chill a person's or legal entity's constitutional rights of petition or free speech, 'Indiana's anti-SLAPP statute provides a defense.'" It continues, "[I]f the lawsuit is filed for an ulterior political end, it is a SLAPP."

In response to the lawsuit, the *Rover* released a statement, defending its reporting as "fair and accurate in all respects."

"The record will confirm

this beyond dispute. The *Rover* will not apologize for just and truthful reporting that helps Our Lady's University stay true to its Catholic mission," the statement continues.

Close to two years later, the Indiana Court of Appeals has reaffirmed this response.

In Notre Dame,
The 2024–2025 Editorial
Staff of the *Irish Rover*.

Theology Professor Lectures on “Research at a Catholic University”

Cavadini explores truth, theology, mission at Notre Dame

PIPER BURROWS

Staff Writer

In partnership with the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture (dCEC), John Cavadini delivered a lecture titled, "Having Your Cake and Eating it Too: Research at a Catholic University." The Notre Dame Professor of Theology drew an audience that nearly filled the Andrews Auditorium in Geddes Hall on January 28.

Cavadini, a member of the Notre Dame faculty since 1990, has served as the director of the McGrath Institute for Church Life for 25 years. He served for five years as a member of the International Theological Commission, appointed by Pope Benedict XVI. In 2018, he received the Monika K. Hellwig Award from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities for Outstanding Contributions to Catholic Intellectual Life.

The lecture, drawing heavily from Pope Saint John Paul II's apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, addressed the fundamental paradox every Catholic university faces in its mission: How can such an institution, professing to know the fount of truth, simultaneously carry out a search for truth?

Cavadini addressed this tension using *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, which he called "the most thorough and most sophisticated reflection on the Catholic university in the literature of the teaching authority of the Catholic Church." The document states, "The Catholic university's privileged task is to unite existentially by intellectual effort, two orders of reality that too frequently tend to be placed in opposition as though they were antithetical: the search for truth and the certainty of already knowing the fountain of truth."

Cavadini noted that most

prestigious universities fail to include the word "truth" in their mission statements and academic guidelines, opting to supplant it with terms like "knowledge" and "research." Cavadini explained the danger of this, saying, "Truth is identified as the basic or fundamental value without which freedom, justice, and human dignity are extinguished."

Cavadini clarified that the mission of a Catholic university is to search for the whole truth, and "no academic discipline, including theology, can claim that it has, by its research, exhausted the meaning of truth."

At a Catholic university, different disciplines, including theology, are brought into conversation in order to see this whole truth. Cavadini

described research at a Catholic university as "a multi-layered conversation among researchers and scholars in different disciplines." Being a Catholic university, he argues, does not prohibit a search for truth, but aids it.

Cavadini concluded, "A Catholic university, unashamed of its spiritual and intellectual heritage and willing to speak its commitment in public to Jesus Christ as the source of wisdom and truth, could find that it is a fountainhead of renewal, not just for Catholic education, but for education as a whole, encouraging the recovery of the essential identity of a university in the pursuit of truth for its own sake."

In a Q&A session following the lecture, one attendee asked Cavadini his advice for researchers at a

secular institution, whose administrations are not aligned under a Catholic mission.

Cavadini explained that all students are looking for something, regardless of religion. He noted that universities give their students the pressure for prestige, and fear of failure, but that the university can give students something else. Cavadini said, "You can give them something else, something that helps them see deeper ideals and deeper aspirations. You'll see your life is not a failure."

Tasha Januszewicz, a graduate student who attended the lecture, told the *Rover*, "This talk kind of gave that idea on an institutional level, that these Catholic universities are a place to express their research and to express their Catholicism through the research."

Cavadini's lecture is available to view on the dCEC's YouTube page. The next lecture from the dCEC is titled "What We Owe to Each Other: Embodiment, Flourishing, and Public Bioethics." Join O. Carter Snead to explore this topic on February 20, in the Eck Visitors Center.

Piper Burrows is a freshman from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. She misses her goldendoodle, Buster, dearly. Send cute dog pics to pburrows@nd.edu.



Image from Angelus

READ MORE ARTICLES AT IRISHROVER.NET



DPAC Films

continued from front

me, it doesn't feel so much like I'm peeping through a window at them, it feels more like we're with Romy, discovering something alongside of her."

After the panel, graduate student Laura Brady shared her opinion on the screening with the *Rover*, saying, "Art shouldn't be censored, and I don't think just because of the kind of university it is, we shouldn't show this type of film. I get that it's outside of Catholic values, but how are you ever supposed to explore your religion, your personal beliefs, your values, if you don't see anything outside of them?"

Brady went on to say, "If you see someone acting outside of your values, that can reinforce them even further. So if you watch this film and you say, 'I

think that's disgusting, I never want to see that again,' amazing. You've learned something about yourself. But if it opens up something in your mind, I don't think that's a bad thing either."

Other students expressed grave concerns with the screening, however. A student from Walsh Hall told the *Rover*, "DPAC's current film season is insulting to our university's Catholic identity. These films should not be shown on our campus as they clearly do not align with the beliefs we ought to hold as Our Lady's University."

She continued, "The misinformation and lies in these films are warping students' perception of truth and reality. The creators of the DPAC season should have the courage to select films that uphold the university's values and align with the teachings of the Catholic Church."

CAMPUS

February 12, 2025

Vol. 22 Iss. 7

5

A sophomore from Cavanaugh Hall echoed these sentiments, saying, "It seems like a question of human dignity, including in a special way the dignity of women."

She explained, "Sexually explicit films often fail to treat the whole human person with the respect and authentic love they deserve, reducing them to an object to be used. It's not only a question of faith but of human dignity in the broader sense."

The DPAC film season includes other sexually explicit films such as *The Apprentice*—a movie about Donald Trump—*American Psycho*, and *Anora*, which follows the romance story of a New York sex worker and also contains graphic sexual scenes.

Executive director of DPAC Ted Barron explained the process of film selection to the

Rover, saying, "For our cinema program, we select a mix of recent critically acclaimed films (right now, we now are focused on films that are in contention for the Academy Awards) and classic films that we package in our Learning Beyond the Classics series."

This is not the first time DPAC has drawn criticism. Last November, DPAC drew criticism from many when it brought a drag show to campus, in partnership with the Gender Studies Program, the Film, Television, and Theater Department, the Department of Music, the Department of American Studies, the Initiative on Race and Resilience, and the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts.

While some of DPAC's presentations have caused concern, the performing arts center is still viewed with pride

by many. McGreevy continued, "I love coming to the Browning Cinema and the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center—I just wish I could do it more often. We've seen many wonderful films and performances here over the years and often brought our children when they were growing up."

More information about the 2024–2025 season of performances and films can be found on the DPAC website.

Abby Strelow is a freshman who spends her time studying theology and trying to smuggle baking ingredients from the dining hall so she can make banana bread. Send her recipes or stealth tips at astrelow@nd.edu.

Notre Dame Theology

continued from front

major. Students may also add a supplemental major in theology or minors in theology, Catholic social teaching, or liturgical music ministry.

Since 2015, the total number of undergraduates studying theology has doubled, and is growing at 7 percent annually—a trend which shows no sign of slowing. This number accounts for enrollment in both majors and minors in theology, but the recent growth has been driven primarily by an explosion of minors which now total around 500—over 5 percent of the undergraduate student population.

This trend is not mirrored at universities nationwide. According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, majors in the humanities are on the decline, especially in the area of religious studies.

In an interview with the *Rover*, Anthony Pagliarini, Director of Undergraduate Studies in theology, pointed to three reasons that he believes have catalyzed the growth in theological interest, bucking the national trends.

Firstly, he said, Notre Dame is attracting Catholic students who are increasingly devoted to their faith. Notre Dame's admissions have long had a soft quota of around 80–85 percent Catholic students; this has continued in spite of the inevitable tension between recruiting a diverse class and a religiously Catholic one. And despite the percentage remaining constant through the years, Pagliarini noted that today's 80 percent "probably includes a lot more people who are deliberately and thoroughly practicing their faith." He called it a sort of "self-selection" as the American culture trends more secular to the point where faith has to be a deliberate choice.

While Notre Dame is drawing more religious students, it is also bringing in students from more diverse backgrounds who have



Image from Notre Dame Theology

little to no religious experience. To address this, the theology department has "had to do things like introduce an alternate version of Foundations, we call fundamentals." This alternative to the required first theology course is specifically designed for those with no exposure to Christian theology.

Secondly, Pagliarini said, "What we do as a theology department ... is not religious studies. ... What we do here as a theology department is theology." In other words, Notre Dame is less interested in studying world religion from an anthropological perspective, but rather more from a desire to contribute to an understanding of the Catholic faith—and ecumenically other faiths as well. This professedly Catholic approach, unique among Notre Dame's peers, attracts a different type of student than religious studies programs at Duke or Oxford.

Pagliarini's third reason for the increase in theological

interest is that the department "put[s] a lot of time and effort into the required courses. These are not perfunctory, leftover on repeat." Pagliarini pointed out that last year, only five to ten freshmen entered Notre Dame intending to major in theology, but by the end of spring 2024, 50 freshmen were enrolled in a theology major and 178 had declared minors. This trend is not unique to 2024; it has been seen in each of the past several years. Pagliarini, who speaks with every student that declares a theology major or minor, credits the required introductory course with a major role in the theological interest of the student body.

Despite the number of students the Foundations of Theology course brings into the major, the university once considered removing the theology requirements from the core curriculum. A 2015 report from the National Catholic Register revealed that Notre Dame's most recent curriculum

review—led by Gregory Crawford, former Dean of the College of Science, and John McGreevy who now serves as university provost—suggested dropping the theology and philosophy requirements.

In response, Professor John Cavadini told the Register, "The core curriculum, with the theology requirement, is probably the most important component of Catholic identity." Another prominent Notre Dame theologian, Sister Ann Astell, commented to the Register, "Philosophical and theological study is simply the indispensable, defining mark of Catholic education," because "'realizing the natural potential of the individual person' is inseparable from the 'supernatural goal of human perfection in Christ.'"

Indeed, Fr. Hesburgh called theology and philosophy of "ultimate importance" in an essay concerning the idea of the Catholic university in America Magazine.

More information on Notre Dame's theology department can be found at theology.nd.edu. Prospective majors or minors can contact Professor Anthony Pagliarini at apaglia1@nd.edu.

Caleb Vaughan is a sophomore studying chemical engineering with a minor in theology. He can be reached at cvaugha2@nd.edu.



StuGov President-Elect speaks with the Rover

Vielhauer-Lumley shares visions amidst campus-wide push to abolish student government

ALLISON BOWMAN

Staff Writer

Sophomore Jerry Vielhauer and junior Sonia Lumley were elected Notre Dame Student Body President and Vice President to succeed the Kiser-Miller administration. Vielhauer and Lumley ran unopposed in the second-ever single-ticket election in student government records, marking the first unopposed election since 2012.

The ticket highlighted several reforms, and it touted a central commitment to both Catholic identity and DEI—diversity, equity, and inclusion—within their platform.

According to the Judicial Council, the Vielhauer-Lumley ticket won just over 55 percent of the total votes, whereas 44 percent of the students who participated in the election voted to abstain, resulting in 899 out of the 1621 votes to be counted as valid. The voter turnout constituted 18 percent of the student body, down from over 50 percent in 2024.

Vielhauer stressed the importance of keeping the university's Catholic values and mission central to what they do. In an interview with the *Rover*, he said, "My Catholic faith is very important to me, as well as Sonia, and it's going to be very important to us to make sure that we're looking at everything through that framework and through that lens."

Vielhauer noted that they plan on integrating the university's Catholic identity through proposals such as increasing outdoor Masses, bringing in more Catholic speakers "like Father Mike Schmitz," and welcoming people from all backgrounds into the Notre Dame community with open arms.

In regards to the previous administration's efforts to improve and promote the annual PrideFest celebration, Vielhauer expressed uncertainty about continuing PrideFest programming. "Whether it happens and what it may entail may be at the discretion of the university administration," Vielhauer added, "Therefore, we have not put much thought into this, but if that is something that is up to us, we will ensure that our decision aligns with



Image by Vielhauer-Lumley Campaign (Instagram)

the values and mission of the university."

In the area of Irish Experience, other efforts included in their platform consist of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Vielhauer and Lumley propose the following DEI policy points: "Establish monthly meetings where student government can interact with the Diversity Council. Converse with the Gender Relations on emphasizing inclusivity. Increase resources for First-Generation Low Income (FGLI) students. Work with the Department of Disability Advocacy on game day accessibility."

Vielhauer told the *Rover*, "We would like to meet with campus entities such as the Diversity Council to make sure that all voices on campus feel heard." Vielhauer added, "At the end of the day, we want to make sure that every student on campus feels a part of the Notre Dame community, and that we all have an equal opportunity to find the success that we are all capable of achieving."

Addressing the low voter turnout, Vielhauer remained optimistic, "Obviously we want to see as high turnouts as possible and I think the fact that there was only one ticket on the ballot contributes to people not caring about it, because ultimately they didn't

have a difference to make with a vote in this ballot and in this election."

Concerning the downward shift of turnout in comparison to last year's 50 percent voter turnout, Vielhauer stated, "I believe that this is just an anomaly with the election pretty much being decided, but I definitely think moving forward that we'll see a higher election turnout." Vielhauer believes that student government efficiency is key to resolving this problem. "I think a big part will be showing that student government can get things done. Which is something we're going to try our absolute best to do, and then hopefully give students more hope that their vote will matter."

Further, underlying negative sentiment toward student government surfaced in light of the unopposed nature of this election.

The Observer's editorial board continued its two-year streak of not endorsing a ticket, claiming that "Abolition is the remedy." Furthermore, they expressed frustration toward student government by highlighting a campus wide push to abolish student government by encouraging voters to abstain in the recent election.

The editorial argued that this election's unopposed nature revealed the current culture

within student government: "In some ways, it is a good thing that there is only one ticket on the ballot. It shatters the pretense of the usual popularity contest election and confirms what many already suspect—student government isn't a battleground of ideas, but an exercise in self-selection. In the past, we've seen tickets with relatively similar visions and ambitious policy platforms lacking real substance. The fact that there's only one ticket running suggests that students across campus have recognized student government for what it is and chosen to disengage."

Despite the controversy surrounding student government, Vielhauer responded to this sentiment by emphasizing patience and reaffirming that without student government there is no chance for any change: "I think it's very easy to be disappointed and frustrated with the system, because a lot of things have to happen on the back end to get things done substantially."

Vielhauer continued, "But I think it is really important to look at it over a course of a couple years and administrations and see that all those little things do add up, and we all see initiatives come into place years after they've been proposed."

Vielhauer further reflected on those students who may feel

disillusioned with the current state of student government: "Whether they voted or didn't vote for Sonia and I, I'm still representing them and I still want to hear their voices and what they have to say to the things they want to see change on campus." He added, "I'm going to do my best to help both voters and non-voters alike, because we represent all of campus, which is a blessing, and I just want to try to do my best to be a certain leader to them."

Vielhauer and Lumley will be sworn in as Student Body President and Vice President on April 1.

Allison Bowman is a sophomore studying economics and constitutional studies. She can be reached at abowman9@nd.edu.

WRITE FOR THE ROVER, EMAIL NDIRISHROVER@GMAIL.COM



Notre Dame Celebrates Jubilee Year of Hope

University promotes pilgrimages, ND Forum, indulgences

KATHRYN BOWERS

Staff Writer

Pope Francis inaugurated the Jubilee Year 2025, themed “Pilgrims of Hope,” by opening the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica on December 24, 2024. Notre Dame is celebrating the Jubilee Year with pilgrimages to Rome, the Notre Dame Forum, and opportunities to receive plenary indulgences at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart.

Notre Dame President Father Robert Dowd, C.S.C. chose the topic “Cultivating Hope” for the Notre Dame Forum of 2025–26. Fr. Dowd explained his reasoning for choosing the theme in a university statement, saying, “In light of the theme the Pope has chosen for the Jubilee Year and its special significance for our Notre Dame community, I have chosen “Cultivating Hope” as the theme for the 2025–26 Notre Dame Forum.”

Fr. Dowd continued, “I believe this to be a fitting theme to follow on this year’s ND Forum theme, ‘What Do We Owe Each Other?’ and one that is most timely in a world where hope is often in short supply.”

The first Notre Dame group to make the pilgrimage to Rome was the Notre Dame Magnificat Choir on their yearly tour in January.

Magnificat Choir director Patrick Kronner shared some of the trip’s moments with the Rover. Among these, he highlighted “processing to the holy door at St. Peter’s as we prayed and sang psalms together; improvising music with guests at the L’Arche community outside of Rome; and, of course, the time that Pope Francis personally asked the choir to sing for him.” The Magnificat Choir performed a rousing rendition of the Notre Dame “Alma Mater” for Pope Francis during his weekly Wednesday audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall.

Elizabeth Krueger, member of the choir and a freshman in Farley Hall, described it as “a pilgrimage with extraordinary graces.” Krueger appreciated the “moving experience to bring such a strong part of our school culture to the head of the Church and that the same song



Image from the Irish Rover

that we sing at football games every weekend was also solicited in Vatican City.”

Additionally, the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture (dCEC) will lead a group of 24 undergraduate and graduate members of its Sorin Fellows Program on pilgrimage to Rome over spring break.

Dave Younger, dCEC Student Formation Program Manager, emphasized to the *Rover*: “Our pilgrimage, both in the planning and in the participation, has been and will be very focused on the Eucharist.” Younger went on to note, “We’ve also introduced Sorin Fellow Holy Hours to increase our adoration of our Lord and hope to have another Holy Hour while we are in Rome.”

Student pilgrims are required to read *Babette’s Feast* by Isak Dineson, and attend two dCEC sponsored events before the pilgrimage departure: a lecture on the Jubilee’s origins, and a discussion on *Babette’s Feast*.

Younger concluded, “I am very excited for the pilgrimage

itself as well as the fruits that will come from it.”

Pope Francis widened the conditions for receiving a plenary indulgence during the Jubilee Year, as specified in the “Decree on the Granting of the Indulgence During the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025.” Conditions now include visiting “the Cathedral or other church or sacred place designated by the local Ordinary,” adding to the original four papal basilicas in Rome of St. Peter’s, St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls, and St. Mary Major.

Bishop Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend designated the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, along with eight other churches in the Diocese of Fort Wayne, as Jubilee sites. A plenary indulgence may be obtained at these churches by attending Mass or another liturgical service and fulfilling the necessary other conditions.

In an interview with the *Rover*, Father Brian Ching, C.S.C., rector of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, noted, “All basilicas have

a special relationship to the Holy Father since their title is a personal gift of the Pope and thus they are natural places of pilgrimage during a jubilee year to receive the mercy of God.”

Fr. Ching described indulgences as “important tools of God’s mercy, granting the remittance of all temporal punishment from sins already forgiven, both for one’s self and for souls in purgatory.” He added, “They are an acknowledgement that our sin damages the soul, but that God is the divine physician and desires to heal us always.”

The basilica will have a Jubilee Mass celebrated by Bishop Rhoades on September 24, 2025. Fr. Ching described it as “an opportunity for us to gather with our diocesan bishop and celebrate the Jubilee year.” He noted that to conclude the Mass, Bishop Rhoades “will exercise a special privilege he is given during the Jubilee Year by imparting the Apostolic Blessing on the faithful. This is usually reserved to the Holy Father.”

On the theme of hope, which suffuses this Jubilee Year, Fr. Ching, in addition to pointing the faithful to the Bull decreeing the Jubilee Year, *Spes Non Confundit*, attributes its significance to its being “one of the great gifts offered by the opportunity to restore and renew our relationship with God offered during the jubilee year.”

Fr. Ching commented, “The mercy that we experience, especially through the indulgence, gives us hope ... that God loves us even when we sin.”

Kathryn Bowers is a senior majoring in the Program of Liberal Studies and theology from Dallas, Texas. You can reach her at kbowers2@nd.edu.





Over 450 Students Attend Class on C. S. Lewis

One-credit course considers the “big questions” through Lewis’ lens

DANIEL MARTIN
Staff Writer

The Department of Theology is offering a one-credit course entitled “C. S. Lewis on God, Evil, Virtue and Vice.” The course, taught by Wilsey Professor of Theology William Mattison III, focuses on addressing “the big questions” through the lens of Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, and *The Great Divorce*. The class is filled to capacity, with 465 students in attendance every Monday night.

Mattison explained to the *Rover* his reasons for centering the course around C. S. Lewis: “I chose C. S. Lewis since he is one of the great Christian apologists, someone who explains the mysteries of the faith in terms accessible to non-believers, and in a manner that deepens the faith of believers. I wanted to read with students about the basic claims of our faith, and we do that through *Mere Christianity*.”

The class is a continuation of the success of the spring 2024 one-credit class on Augustine’s *Confessions*, taught by Father Kevin Grove, C.S.C. Both courses were sponsored by the McGrath Institute for Church Life’s “Take a Second Look” program, an initiative developed by Fr. Grove, Joshua McManaway of the McGrath Institute, and Professor Anthony Pagliarini, the theology department’s Director of Undergraduate Studies.

According to its website, the “Take a Second Look” program encourages students to think more deeply about “the beauty and profundity of the Catholic faith that they thought they had left behind, outgrown, or had never considered relevant to their lives in the first place.”

Mattison said, “Given that a one-credit course gets you little in terms of core or major requirements, it was a beautiful



Image by the Irish Rover

sign of the Spirit that so many ND undergraduates were longing to have their faith nourished in an intellectually informed manner. [The *Confessions* class] was such a success that the Theology department decided to offer such a course every spring, and for this second one they asked me.”

Senior Muria Murinova told the *Rover* that it was largely Fr. Grove’s class that inspired her to enroll in this course on C. S. Lewis. “I took the [Lewis] class because the Augustine’s *Confessions* class with Fr. Grove last spring was really impactful for me. I’m also a huge fan of C. S. Lewis and have actually already read the works we’re going through in the course.”

Senior Ainsley Gibbs told the *Rover* that the choice of C. S. Lewis as the guiding thread of moral questions is what drew her to the class: “I was motivated to take the Lewis course because I read *Mere Christianity* over the summer and loved it so much that I read it again. I wanted to take this course to be introduced to more of his work in a theology

context and with a professor and so many friends.”

Mattison echoed Gibbs’ assessment of the communal aspect of the class, “I hope the course helps build friendships among ND students interested in living out their faith boldly in community with others.”

In addition to the intellectual and social aspects of the class, Mattison noted the applicability of Lewis’ apologetics to our regular experience: “[I] wanted them to see that our faith is eminently practical, and that claims about God, Jesus Christ, God’s grace and the Church shape our everyday lives. Hence the course is subtitled, ‘God and Evil, Virtue and Vice.’ Our faith’s claims about God and evil play out in how we live everyday (virtue and vice). To get at that, we read *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*.”

Senior Collin Bowers hopes to grow in his evangelical skills by reading Lewis: “I want to learn how to more effectively share Christianity with others. C. S. Lewis is a master at explaining Christian ideas to a secular

world that puts its faith in the false gods of science, technology, and individualism. I particularly love his analogies, which make Christian ideas seem like common sense.”

However, Bowers also expressed his reservations about presenting *Mere Christianity* as a sufficient guide to the basics of the Christian faith, since the work never addresses the question of an institutional and universal Church, a fundamental teaching of Catholicism. “Although Lewis was Anglican, his compelling arguments for God, Jesus Christ, and objective morality have led many to a deepened faith and to the Catholic Church founded by Christ Himself,” Bowers noted.

Lewis addresses this concern in the preface of *Mere Christianity*: “You will not learn from me whether you ought to become an Anglican, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or a Roman Catholic. This omission is intentional (even in the list I have just given the order is alphabetical).”

Mattison explained that there is only one written requirement

for the class: “For a final assignment, students compose their own *Screwtape Letters*, ideally in the context of the life of a Notre Dame student. ... I also hope to gather 30 to 40 of the best final submissions and get them published in a book, a sort of Notre Dame version of *The Screwtape Letters*.” Mattison added a possible name for the compilation: “The Devilish Leprechaun Letters.”

The class meets on Monday nights at 7 p.m. in the largest lecture hall on campus, Debartolo 101.

Daniel Martin is a senior from Skippack, Pennsylvania in the Program of Liberal Studies. He can be contacted at dmarti29@nd.edu.

Follow the *Irish Rover* on Social Media!



Twitter: @NDIrishRover



Instagram: @irishrovernd



Economics Professor, Students React to Trump Tariffs

What increased tariffs mean for the economy in 2025

KEVIN ANDREWS, JR.
Staff Writers

Since his January inauguration, Trump's White House has taken swift action on tariff policy, fulfilling promises made throughout the 2024 campaign to combat trade deficits, illegal immigration, and drug smuggling. Initially aimed at Mexico, Canada, Colombia, and the European Union, among others, Trump has imposed a flat 10 percent tariff on all imports from China and a 25 percent tariff on all imports of steel and aluminum.

The international community has largely acceded to Trump's wishes. While the Mexican, Canadian, and Colombian governments have participated in negotiations, the stock market demonstrated volatility as traders aim to combat high prices and focus on spurring the domestic economy.

The administration's White House Fact Sheet describes the tariffs as a "powerful, proven source of leverage for protecting the national interest. President Trump is using the tools at hand and taking decisive action that puts Americans' safety and our national security first."

The administration reinforced their decision, stressing, "President Trump is taking bold action to hold Mexico, Canada, and China accountable to their promises of halting illegal immigration and stopping poisonous fentanyl and other drugs from flowing into our country." The tariff leverage worked to the United States' benefit, as the Colombian government first turned away deportees, but later accepted the plane of illegal immigrants back into the country.

Reactions to the tariffs across campus have been mixed. Freshman Nick DeNatale told the *Rover*, "President Trump's tariffs were a necessary step to counter decades of unfair trade practices that hurt American workers and businesses. By imposing tariffs,



Image by Wikimedia Commons

he forced countries like China to the negotiating table and prioritized U.S. manufacturing and economic sovereignty."

DeNatale approved of Trump's prioritization of American economic independence, adding, "While critics argue about short-term costs, the long-term goal was to reduce dependence on foreign supply chains and bring jobs back to America—something no other president had the courage to tackle head-on."

Duncan resident Hayden Stokes took a more neutral stance on the tariff moves, telling the *Rover*, "[The tariffs] may cause some short-term harm to the economy but are also useful as a bargaining chip in international relations."

The *Rover* interviewed economics professor Forrest Spence, who expressed hesitancy about Trump's negotiation tactic: "We'll see. In 2018, when Trump initially

started imposing tariffs on, you know, solar panel cells and washing machines and steel and aluminum, and then just a bunch of flat tariffs on Chinese imports, it was like, hey, you know, maybe we can get some concessions out of this from the Chinese government, [but] that never came to pass."

Another fear that many Americans have expressed is the risk tariffs could present to prices in an inflationary environment. To that point, Spence told the *Rover*, "You get a one-time shock to inflation. That's not great. I mean, it's not terrible. It is bad that consumers have to pay higher prices for particular types of things. You are making us materially poorer through this, but maybe you're generating revenue. Economists would say that there are better ways to generate tax return revenue than through tariffs."

Using the example of steel,

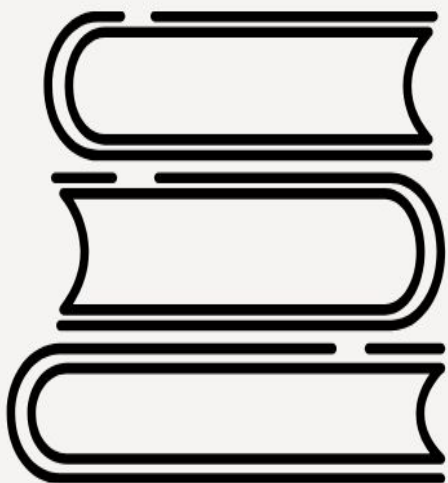
Spence noted the threat these positions pose to intermediate goods: "When you impose taxes on steel and aluminum, MillerCoors is not happy, right? Boeing's not happy, Ford's not happy, because at the end of the day, they need steel in order to produce stuff."

While Spence conceded that some political leverage may be useful in securing favorable trade conditions for the U.S., he still stressed the importance of resisting a hostile situation, saying, "I am not opposed to trying to make sure that other governments are acting in good faith. And if how you're going to do that is threatening them with something that's bad for them, my only hope is that the resolution of that is that the bad thing doesn't happen and everybody just kind of behaves in a more efficient way."

Spence continued, "The danger is that you end up in a world where ... countries balk

and they have retaliatory tariffs and we have tariffs; and you end up in this situation where everybody's trying to screw everybody, and everybody is poor because of that."

Kevin Andrews is a sophomore in Keough Hall majoring in political science and economics. When not covering international war, he can be found in Duncan Student Center, wasting his Flex points, probably on Chick-fil-A. He can be reached at kandrew6@nd.edu.



Visit us online at
irishrover.net
for archived articles.



Trump's Cabinet Appointees Face Congressional Scrutiny

Students, professors comment on confirmation processes

ELLA YATES
Staff Writer

Confirmation hearings are well underway for some of President Donald J. Trump's most prominent appointments to his cabinet. In stark contrast to Trump's first administration, his second term ushered in a swift transition, and his team is rapidly moving forward to accomplish many of the goals he campaigned on.

Trump's confirmed cabinet features an impressive array of conservative leaders, among them Florida Senator Marco Rubio as Secretary of State; retired U.S. Army Major and Fox News anchor Pete Hegseth as the Secretary of Defense; and former Governor Kristi Noem of South Dakota as the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Trump's team also features some highly controversial picks who are awaiting confirmation, including Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Tulsi Gabbard.

Kennedy, despite his original 2024 presidential campaign as a Democrat, has been unanimously opposed by Senate Democrats. During his run, he campaigned independently and swung a significant percentage of the country's vote in August 2024 polls. He gathered wide support as Americans related to his more centrist positions and his goal to "Make America Healthy Again." In August 2024, Kennedy suspended his campaign and began stumping for Trump with the understanding that he would be part of Trump's cabinet as the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Senator Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts Democrat, pressed Kennedy about how his skeptical attitude towards vaccines could impact his work in taking up anti-vaccine lawsuits after his tenure with the HHS. Senator Bernie Sanders, Vermont Independent, pushed Kennedy to respond to his prior statements on vaccines being linked to autism and his lawsuit against the FDA concerning the



Image by Wikimedia Commons

COVID-19 vaccine.

In response to these allegations, Kennedy restated his goal to "make America healthy again." He also hit back sharply against Congress, reminding them that "the problem of corruption is not just in the federal agencies, it's in Congress too. Almost all the members of this panel are accepting ... millions of dollars from the pharmaceutical industry and protecting your interests." In reply to Sanders, Kennedy said he is not going into the HHS with any preconceived notions. Kennedy defended the lawsuits by reminding the chamber that the COVID-19 vaccine was being pushed on children under six without any testing or proof of efficacy.

Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, who awaits Senate confirmation as Director of the National Institute of Health, highlighted similar data from his own work in California studying COVID-19 responses in a November 2024 lecture with Notre Dame's Center for Citizenship and Constitutional Government.

Kennedy has made clear that he is not seeking the role to eliminate vaccines or to stop parents from giving them to their children, but rather to increase

transparency surrounding them and provide parents with adequate information to make a choice for their children.

On February 4, the Senate Finance Committee voted 14-13 to advance the vote on Kennedy's nomination to the full Senate. Democrats voted unanimously to oppose the vote, while Senator Bill Cassidy, Louisiana Republican, cast the key vote for Kennedy's advancement after initially expressing uncertainty about Kennedy's aptitude.

Tulsi Gabbard, former Democrat House Representative from Hawaii, is another nominee facing significant backlash. After being questioned on if she gives Russia "a pass in either her mind or heart," Gabbard promptly defused the allegations. She responded, "I am offended by the question because my sole focus, commitment, and responsibility is about our own nation, our own security, and the interests of the American people." Gabbard's answer was a clear representation of Trump's emphasis on staffing his second administration with those who will prioritize America and put her citizens first.

During her hearing, Gabbard also cited alleged injustices

perpetrated by leaders of intelligence agencies under the Biden administration, saying, "The FBI and intelligence agencies were politicized by his opponents to undermine his presidency and falsely portray him as a puppet of Putin." She added, "The CIA abused its power to spy on Congress, to dodge oversight, and lied about it."

Gabbard also mentioned the Biden administration's allowance of "the FBI [to abuse] its power for political reasons to try to surveil Catholics who attend Traditional Latin Mass." The report describes Catholics who attend the Traditional Latin Mass to be potentially "violent extremists" and termed their surveillance as "threat mitigation."

When asked about Trump's nominees, Jack Rankin, a freshman in Keough Hall, said to the *Rover*, "I believe President Trump hopes to avoid encountering opposition within his administration, like he did in his first term, by picking people like Pete Hegseth who is far from the most experienced in his field, and whom he can easily overrule."

Andrew Gould, Associate Professor of Political Science, told the *Rover*, "The fact that

some of the nominees don't have the standard resume is in fact what people are looking for. People are looking for changing the way business has been conducted in the American government."

Gould commented further, saying, "Objections to what have been going on, that bureaucrats are not elected and that they've been making decisions that have the force of law," adding that "people have lost confidence that what governs our lives has actually been arrived at in a democratic fashion."

Paul Weithman, Glynn Family Honors Professor of Philosophy, expressed concern over bureaucracy in Trump's administration in members like Elon Musk who "[has] not been elected to anything, he's not been confirmed to anything, and yet he's got an enormous amount of power and he is accountable to nobody except President Trump."

While final votes will take place in the coming weeks to confirm the remaining members of Trump's administration, the President has shown that he is ready to enact the changes he campaigned on. His cabinet nominees are vital representations of the mission he hopes to pursue.

Ella Yates is a sophomore studying philosophy, political science, and theology from Western Springs, Illinois. Lately, her time has been filled with studying for her never-ending cycle of Latin quizzes and daydreaming about going to Rome. Si aliquid linguam Latinam cum ea vult renovare, email eyates4@nd.edu.





Vance Clashes With USCCB Over Immigration

Catholic bishops take aim at Trump policies

COLIN HEIL
Staff Writer

In one of the president's first executive actions after being sworn in, Trump took aim at longstanding immigration policy, prompting criticism from members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The new Department of Homeland Security policy ended the precedent of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) being prohibited from "mak[ing] arrests in or near 'sensitive' areas, such as churches, hospitals, or schools."

The USCCB's migration committee chairman, Bishop of the Diocese of El Paso Mark Seitz, took particular issue with "conducting a raid or enforcement action in a church service [or] at a school." Vice President J. D. Vance voiced his disagreement with the USCCB, and Vance, a practicing Catholic himself, said in reference to Bp. Seitz's comment that he "was actually heartbroken by [the] statement."

Catholic groups in the U.S. are a significant recipient of migrant aid, and Vance has used this fact to argue that the bishops are "more worried about their bottom line," since "they received over 100 million dollars to help resettle illegal immigrants" last year. In fact, "total federal grants and contributions made to the [USCCB]" has skyrocketed



Image by Wikimedia Commons

"from 14.6 million dollars under the first Trump administration in 2019 to 122.6 million dollars in 2022."

In a further escalation of the conflict, Archbishop of New York Timothy Cardinal Dolan criticized Vance's spat with the USCCB. Card. Dolan condemned Vance's remarks as "scurrilous" and "nasty" weeks after attending Vance's inauguration. In response to Vance insinuating that the Church only wants to protect migrants to protect their pocketbooks, Card. Dolan said, "You think we make money caring for the immigrants? We're losing it hand over fist."

During his January 26 interview with Margaret Brennan on CBS News' *Face the Nation*, Vance stated that the USCCB has "not been a

good partner in commonsense immigration enforcement that the American people voted for." However, there are some within the Church establishment who differ with USCCB majority opinion.

Bishop Michael Burbidge of the Diocese of Arlington released a January 31 pastoral letter titled, "A Pastoral Statement on American Immigration Law and the Catholic Imperative of Upholding Human Dignity and the Common Good." In the statement, Bp. Burbidge writes, "We are a Church that stands for justice, not against the enforcement of law, but for its application with mercy and understanding for the good of all persons and our country."

Throughout the statement, Bp. Burbidge emphasizes that his opinion is informed by

Catholic Social Teaching and Christ's example, but maintains his opinion that proper law enforcement can fit within these teachings. Bp. Burbidge went on to say that "our laws exist to safeguard the good of all, and they must be respected."

Freshman Chris Qian disagreed with Bp. Burbidge, arguing that the new immigration enforcement policy may overstep unspoken boundaries by violating the sanctity of schools and churches. Qian stated, "We should allow the churches to have their way, but we should carefully monitor the situation so that if illegal immigrants decide to use churches as hideouts, then the government will have the jurisdiction to detain and deport them."

While the ongoing debate has been primarily between the Trump administration and USCCB, the migration issue has long existed and has been addressed under multiple papacies. Pope Francis, in a 2017 interview, when asked "Can borders be controlled?" said, "Yes, each country has a right to control its borders, who enters and who leaves, and countries that are in danger—of terrorism or the like—have more right to control them more ..."

Pope Francis has since modified his opinion and said in a 2024 statement that "working to turn migrants away from the prospect of peace and security in

a new country is 'a grave sin.'" Nonetheless, he acknowledged that state sovereignty must be maintained and migrants handled "compassionately."

The question of migration was also addressed by Pope Saint John Paul II in a message to the Church on World Migration Day in 1996. John Paul stated that "Illegal immigration should be prevented, but it is also essential to vigorously combat the criminal activities which exploit illegal immigrants." Echoing Francis's sentiments, the Church under Pope John Paul II did not condone breaking the law, but they also recognized the complexity of the migration issue.

The USCCB has not always stood in opposition to Trump policy; they have welcomed the changes in the cases of "school choice, restricting federal support for gender transitions, and limiting foreign aid to organizations that provide or promote abortion."

Colin Heil is a freshman studying political science from McLean, Virginia. In his free time he enjoys reading up on world events and can be found in the Rock/Duncan each night at closing time. He can be reached at cheil@nd.edu.

Illegal Immigration Crackdown Sparks Controversy

Pope and Archbishops trade barbs

SAM MARCHAND
Politics Editor

Since taking office on January 20, the Trump administration has arrested and deported over 5,700 illegal immigrants. Tom Homan, former acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), has been informally appointed as "border czar," speaking to national media as an emissary of the administration. Trump campaigned heavily on immigration, and increased border enforcement ranked among top issues with voters in the November election.

Catholics worldwide have taken notice of the president's efforts. In an address from the Vatican, Pope Francis called President Trump's plans for mass deportations "a disgrace," adding that the plan to deter migration is "a grave sin."

Francis has clashed with Trump on immigration in the past. In the leadup to the election, the Pope urged American Catholics to vote "for the lesser of two evils" because both candidates were, in his opinion, "against life." Despite this, Trump earned the endorsement of The National Right to Life Committee, the

largest pro-life group in the U.S., as well as CatholicVote, a conservative non-profit political advocacy group.

Some prelates, however, find no issue with the deportations. Bishop Michael Burbidge of the Diocese of Arlington outwardly praised Trump's efforts, saying in a pastoral letter that he wishes to "offer pastoral encouragement to President Donald Trump and Vice President J. D. Vance." Addressing the conflict between the Trump administration and the Pope, Bp. Burbidge offered another view, writing, "We must not presume a conflict between human dignity and the rule of law."

The student body had mixed reactions to the crackdown. Emily Zavala, a sophomore in Welsh Family Hall from Edinburg, Texas—a town 20 miles from the border—was deeply concerned. In a comment to the *Rover*, she discussed the impact of increased border control, saying, "I see fear and anxiety, families struggling yet determinedly using their rights to prevent family separation." Citing what she sees as a contradiction with Notre Dame's values, she added, "These deportations go against

the university's mission of improving lives and helping the community."

David Murphy, a freshman in Siegfried Hall, agreed with Bp. Burbidge about the importance of the rule of law: "Entering the country illegally is a crime, and the situation with illegal immigration has gotten way out of hand." He continued, "I do generally approve of the deportation efforts, especially since there are a lot of bad people who enter this country illegally to do terrible things, and I think that's where the focus has been on the efforts so far."

Commenting on the Pope's criticism of Trump, Murphy was skeptical, saying, "Honestly, I don't really think the Pope has a great point here." Murphy added, "I understand the Catholic and faith based argument for helping others in need, but there does come a point where the rule of law needs to hold." Echoing a common sentiment among Trump voters, Murphy said, "We can't function as a country if we don't have a strong border and coherent immigration policies."

Father William Dailey, C.S.C., Lecturer in Law at Notre Dame Law School and rector of Graham Family Hall, elaborated



Image by Flickr

on the Pope's comments, saying, "When any pope speaks about American politics he's speaking at the broadest level of generality and speaking of principles and calling us to the very highest of standards—being Christ-like." Fr. Dailey defended the direction of Bp. Burbidge's pastoral letter, explaining, "Bishop Burbidge's letter is a very good one in laying out what the Church does and does not teach with respect to immigration."

Fr. Dailey offered guidance to the Notre Dame community, saying, "I'd encourage those who are committed to the gospel to think less as partisans and more as aspiring saints. That doesn't mean open borders, but it does

mean a profound commitment to hospitality and compassion. We don't have to trade one set of bad policies for another."

Sam Marchand is a sophomore studying political science and finance from Beaumont, Texas. He squanders much of his spare time by reading the Current Events section of Wikipedia preparing arguments for ND Speech & Debate, of which he serves as president. He can be reached at smarcha3@nd.edu.



Who's Who: Debra Blaschko

Meet an Inspired Leadership Initiative fellow and pro-life advocate

MADLINE PAGE
Staff Writer

Debra Blaschko is a mother, grandmother, retired journalist, pro-life advocate, and non-profit founder who joined the ranks of Notre Dame students in the fall of 2024.

After navigating the coronavirus pandemic, lung cancer, and myocarditis, Blaschko told the *Rover* that she was seeking a way to “renew [her] gusto,” when her son, Notre Dame philosophy professor Paul Blaschko, pointed her toward the Inspired Leadership Initiative (ILI). ILI is a selective program that provides accomplished retired individuals with opportunities for discerning their next step in life. Fellows participate in cohort dialogues, as well as campus culture and audited classes alongside students.

“I am so grateful for the ILI experience,” Blaschko shared with the *Rover*. “I’m going to get every ounce of everything out of this program, because I’m just so excited by it.”

Blaschko comes from a big family on a small Minnesota farm. The tenth of twelve children, she was the first of her siblings to complete a four-year degree. After studying mass communications and business at Minnesota State University, she worked for a county seat newspaper as a reporter and

editor, before taking time to raise and homeschool her children. Later, Blaschko took up positions in student financial services at Minnesota State University and as a freelance writer.

Building off of her passions for family relationships, Blaschko remains active in ministries promoting Catholic family values. Alongside her husband, a deacon in the Catholic church, she has served at pre-marriage retreats with her husband for over 35 years, presenting topics ranging from finances to Natural Family Planning. She told the *Rover* about her special passion for educating women about the dignity of their bodies and the importance of monitoring their health, saying, “We see the value, benefits, and beauty of recognizing how a woman’s body works and how fertility is a gift, and not a problem to be solved.”

Blaschko is also a founding member of the non-profit organization Options for Women/Mankato.

Options Mankato is a pro-life Pregnancy Medical Clinic Family Resource Center, which is “dedicated to helping women who are facing an unplanned or difficult pregnancy,” and offers services such as obstetrical ultrasounds, medical quality pregnancy testing, and educational resources free of charge. The center also features a store, where clients who attend parenting classes can earn

credits to purchase items such as cribs, pack and plays, and baby toys.

Blaschko was inspired to create Options Mankato after her encounters with women who were facing unplanned pregnancies and wanted to reconcile their options with their values. To garner traction for the inception of Options, she hosted an initial interest meeting in which she planned for an audience of twelve people. Eighty attended. The Options team opened their first location in Mankato, Minnesota, later upsizing to a larger location two years later due to growing impact.

Blaschko has held a variety of roles with Options Mankato, including volunteering as an advocate for the center’s education program, assisting with marketing, co-chairing the annual Gala, and writing newsletters.

“It’s kind of like being a mom and a grandma all wrapped into one,” she said. “[The women] have all sorts of different questions about life, and a lot of them don’t have that grandma and mom that they can turn to. Meeting clients and working through lessons on pregnancy, parenting, and sometimes adoption has been amazing.”

As a Fellow with the ILI, Blaschko hopes to expand upon her “desire to give back and make the world a better place” through her educational experiences.



Image submitted by Debra Blaschko

Highlights from her first semester included theology and art classes, as well as cohort discussions and interactions with Notre Dame undergraduates.

As she continues her time at Notre Dame, Blaschko told the *Rover* she hopes to grow in her understanding of others’ perspectives and how they are formed. Blaschko commented, “We seem to avoid topics that cause conflict. How are we ever going to understand why someone has a strong belief in something if it is never discussed?” She continued, “We need to get out of our echo chambers and open our minds and hearts. We need to listen and learn.”

Blaschko will continue to

participate in Notre Dame classes through the end of the spring semester. After graduation, she plans to return to Mankato to continue her service work.

Madeline Page is a freshman biology major who has recently begun spending her Friday afternoons increasing the mosquito population by tending to laboratory colonies. She has been told that it is for a good cause. Concerns can be sent to mpage4@nd.edu.

Rover Reviews: *Wicked: Part 1* *A timely or timeless film?*

KATIEBELLE THOMPSON
Staff Writer

November 2024 was the season of comebacks—President Donald Trump, chunky loafers, and obviously, *Wicked*: the film adaptation of the 2003 Broadway show. In production since 2012, the film managed to survive both COVID-19 and the SAG-AFTRA strike. The finished product is well worth waiting for.

In addition to its well-known soundtrack, some have taken an interest in *Wicked* from a political angle, seeing its story as particularly resonant of the current political zeitgeist. One reviewer commented, “[*Wicked*’s] depiction of fascism was not meant to resemble America in 2024, but here we are.” Some see Donald Trump in Jeff Goldblum’s portrayal of a power-hungry oppressor. Others draw parallels between defunding DEI and the silencing of animals in the film.

Yet, despite its use of political themes, *Wicked* is not itself a political statement. Its scenarios are intentionally separated from current political events and stances, ensuring that no audience member is pandered



Image from Universal Pictures

to or offended. More than just being “timely,” it can rightly be called “timeless.”

Take the film’s theme of censorship, for example. At Shiz

University, Elphaba and G(a) linda learn history from Dr. Dillamond, a goat. When he attempts to teach Oz’s animal history, he finds, “ANIMALS

SHOULD BE SEEN NOT HEARD,” scrawled on his blackboard. Afterwards, he tells Elphaba that Oz’s animals are losing their ability to speak, before he’s abducted from class and his professorship stripped. Their new professor displays “the cage,” and explains it will keep animals from speaking, permanently. At the climax, we learn that the Wizard himself is silencing animals, because they’re threatening his regime.

Though some have seen Dr. Dillamond’s presence as indicative of events within the current political scene, censorship is nothing new, and *Wicked*’s treatment of this is not directly connected to 2024. Several movies have created allusions through choosing specific phrases, jokes, or symbolism to point to the present, but *Wicked* doesn’t do this.

Note: I’m not saying this scene lacks real-world parallels; I’m saying this is temporal coincidence, not intentional allusion. Historical censorship includes Zuckerberg’s pandemic post purge, YouTube’s removal of videos criticizing transgenderism, the punishment of students and teachers protesting the Vietnam

War, and the 1798 Sedition Act.

But *Wicked*’s society is more similar to authoritarianism than fascism. When Glinda and Elphaba travel to the Emerald City, they hear how the Wizard rose to power (in song form). When he arrived, he could read their “Grimmerie” spellbook, making him the chief wizard. This magical ability is later revealed to be false, leading the Wizard to suppress rebellious speech, using others’ abilities to maintain his charade. Regardless, he doesn’t create a sense of nationalism, take away electoral democracy, or create hierarchy.

Propaganda is most obvious in the finale. Madame Morrible (professor and the Wizard’s coconspirator) announces Elphaba’s “betrayal” to the Emerald City: “Citizens of Oz ... there is an enemy who must be found. ... Believe nothing she says. ... She is evil. Responsible ... Her green skin is but an outward (manifestation) of her twisted nature. This distortion, this repulsion, this wicked witch.”

For context: The Wizard and Morrible asked Elphaba to make the monkeys levitate; casting

continued on pg. 13



A Home for Women's Faith and Fellowship

Vocation to Love at Notre Dame

ELIZABETH MITCHELL
Culture Editor

Laughter, cats, and the smell of freshly lit candles fill the Younger home every Wednesday night as women file through the doorway and exchange hugs. Mugs of steaming tea in hand, they find a comfy position in the living room and begin to pray.

Vocation to Love (VTL), informally known as “girl’s group” among members of the Younger household, is a weekly gathering of women from across the tri-campus community, centered around book discussion, prayer, and fellowship.

Sponsored by the Sorin Fellows program of the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture (dCEC), the group is led by Suzy Younger—a mother, FertilityCare Practitioner at Saint Joseph OBGYN, and Notre Dame marriage preparation coordinator. Though VTL is now a thriving community of 154 women, it all started with an informal conversation during Senior Week of 2016.

While on a trip to Silver Beach with a graduating mentee and her friend, Younger recalls how “seemingly out of nowhere” the women began to ask for advice about life after Notre Dame and how she knew her husband Dave was “the one.” Struck by the beauty of their questions, yet struggling to find an adequate response in only one afternoon, Younger recalled her feelings at the time, saying, “I was simultaneously moved that these were the questions most on their mind during Senior Week and yet overwhelmed at the thought of trying to answer them in just one beach conversation before they graduated. It seemed too little, too late. To truly answer the deepest questions of their heart, I knew I needed more time—as much time as I could get with them—four years,



Image from Suzy Younger

ideally.”

After the conversation, Younger shared how she felt called to help other women who were grappling with these same questions. Drawing inspiration from Blessed Basil Moreau—Founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross—she stated, “I became convicted that we needed to cultivate a community of women, welcomed into a home and family life, where we could vulnerably share life and form our minds and hearts with a cup of tea in hand.”

Though much has changed as the group has evolved, Younger notes that the foundation of VTL’s mission has largely remained the same. She shared with the *Rover*, “Our name, Vocation to Love, comes from the understanding that each person who has received the love of Christ has the vocation, or calling, to give that love to those around them and to the world.”

Younger continued, “When we first began the group, my focus was on trying to offer the girls formation for living marriage and family life. But as the group continued we saw more and more religious vocations coming from our group as well. The vocation to

love was not just for married life, but religious life, and truly for each and every woman no matter her vocation or state in life.”

Nine years later, VTL is thriving, and it has featured content ranging from the female saints of the Church—whom Younger calls “our sisters”—to practical skill-building in fertility awareness, stress management, and personal wholeness, such as the Reform Wellness program.

This semester, VTL is reading *The Mindful Catholic*, written by Catholic psychologist Dr. Gregory Bottaro. When asked why she selected this book, Younger cited the growing amount of stress and pressure she has observed among young women in her line of work.

Convicted in the role of the Catholic faith in mental well-being, Younger said, “To be able to sift through the many voices, perspectives, and pressures, we need to be able to discern from a place of mental clarity and in a state of physical and mental health. This begins with understanding who God is, who we are in His eyes as his daughters, and then flows to a better understanding of ourselves and on to how we live

in relationships with others.”

Younger continued, “But truly the most impactful way I’ve seen God work through our group is the healing and joy that occurs when women are welcomed into a home environment, away from the stresses of campus life, and embraced as they are, for who they are, with all of their gifts, strength, talents, imperfections, and vulnerabilities. I have seen our group become a place of safety and warmth where girls release anxiety, find joy and friendship, and learn to practically trust God more in their life. ... It’s simply incredible.”

Maria Murinova, a senior and VTL regular, shared how important the group has been for her mental wellbeing. She told the *Rover*, “One of my favorite things about VTL is that it brings students together in a home. It’s so nice to physically leave campus and all the stress, and I think it makes it easier to really reflect on the themes we talk about and just enjoy each other’s company.”

Murinova continued, “It’s been such a gift to walk with Suzy and all the VTL girls through the past few years, and I’m so grateful I encountered this community where everyone

is open to sharing their joys and struggles with one another as we all strive for holiness.”

Today, the VTL network is continuing to grow. In addition to hosting Notre Dame undergraduates, the group has expanded to include students from St. Mary’s and Holy Cross College, graduate and law students, religious sisters, and even satellite networks with alumnae across the country.

Caroline Isom, a junior in McGlinn Hall, shared her love for the wide diversity of women whom VTL attracts, saying, “One of my favorite parts of VTL is witnessing the example of other women around me in different stages of life. It is such a gift to hear the stories of women of all vocations and journeys—sisters, undergrads, grad students, and more—and be united in our love for Christ.”

Isom continued, “When I was searching for other women of faith to surround myself with, VTL welcomed me with the warmest arms, and it’s been such a joy to draw others in myself. Everyone needs a community like that.”

VTL meetings are held weekly on Wednesdays at 8 p.m. Interested young women can find out more information through the dCEC’s Sorin Fellows program, or contact Suzy Younger at syounger@nd.edu.

Elizabeth Mitchell is a sophomore studying the Program of Liberal Studies and theology. Though she doesn’t care for cats, she has been mistaken for a grandma by her quadmates (and Spotify!) for being a self-proclaimed “tea fiend,” and loving old music. Contact her at emitche8@nd.edu.



It behooves a watchdog to bark. Good, Rover.

Rover Reviews *Wicked*
continued from pg. 12

the spell with the Grimmerie, Elphaba gave the monkey wings accidentally. Afterwards, she overheard them discussing the monkeys’ potential as spies, and Elphaba discovered their plot against animals.

The language here is classic, broad, dystopian propaganda. It’s Orwellian in tone, but it declines to parallel recent events. The language here is nonspecific, yet deadly serious; imperative, and emotional. Sentences are simple, lacking detail. While it’s reminiscent of political discourse today,

it’s merely an imitation of the general trend, not a comment on specific political besmirching.

In conclusion, *Wicked: Part 1* is not a politically aligned film, though it uses political themes to tell its story. In an era of political hysteria, it’s easy for the news-obsessed to assume that a film is “about” or “for”

them, but we must not make these proclamations hastily. *Wicked* declines to use its scenes to comment on, parody, or retell recent events. It is a great strength of a film that’s released in such a polarized culture that we can all laugh at the jokes, make some popcorn, and sing along.

Katiebelle Thompson is a senior who studies. She once played the Wicked Witch in a school play. For further information (on this article, her hobbies, or general lore) reach out to cthompson23@nd.edu.



Self-Love Week Spirals into Campus-Wide War

“Self-love is the first sin, the first progeny of the devil, and the mother of the passions” - St. Maximus the Confessor

JAMES WHITAKER

Humor Editor

There is silence in LaFun except for the muffled sound of distant screams from outside. Lights flicker, water pools, and the smell of sewage lingers. Aisles and aisles of empty convenience store shelves have been rearranged into barricades. The old convenience store has been aptly named, for that is all its current patrons do: Huddle, and hide.

Not even six hours into Student Government’s disastrous “Self-Love Week,” the cracks begin to show. Student Government, expecting low-to-moderate turnout for their giveaways, came underprepared with only a handful of stress balls and candy bars. The Roman poet Juvenal said, “Give them bread and circuses and they will never revolt.” But the bread was gone, and the circuses, quiet.

The spiral began when two students simultaneously reached for the final Whatchamacallit candy bar. Both realized that their love of self was being threatened by the other. Sharp threats turned to violence, and like a den of hyenas with a morsel of meat, a cutthroat war broke out.

The student body had been swept up in their government’s rhetoric of self-love. Self-love soured, mutating into self-devotion, self-obsession, and self-worship. False preachers outside the library cried novel doctrines: “Love thy neighbor or thine self.” The law was

supplanted by Darwin’s texts, and the scarcity of care was discovered.

The following days saw a mass unraveling. One might have expected a factioning in times of civil unrest, but no alliances were made. The only thing close to human partnership and interaction remaining is the black market, operated out of the defunct NDPD station. What began as exchanges of candy and socks for money has rapidly escalated to the highest physical luxuries. Hammes Mowbray is now overrun with firearms, hard drugs, stolen jewelry, and several live tigers.

The administration has all fled, and the C.S.C. have turned Corby into a fortress capable of withstanding a month-long siege. They have already suffered three martyrdoms, all cases of Holy Cross priests attempting

to evangelize or administer the sacraments when they are beaten and robbed of the crosses around their necks; metal has become a precious resource in the scarce economy of self-care.

Gudent Stövernment, a psychologist from the University of Berlin, remarked, “The perceptions of those subject to self-mania are horribly warped. A gentle case of self-care begins with a healthy amount of eating and sleeping. But if no fasting ever breaks up the feasting, it snowballs. Self-love persuades them to rely on more luxury than they need, and before long we end up here: self-mania.”

Stövernment cited several similar instances of self-mania among young educated Americans. “It starts with taking time off of work because of a break-up, which is fine. But then it’s skipping work to go

on a cruise because it’s cold in January, then dropping out of school to travel the world with a wealthy septuagenarian, and it too often ends with black-widow inheritance-nabbing ‘suicides.’ A textbook decline.”

Government intervention has been impossible. President Trump declines to get involved, claiming that it is “a learning moment for how Biden’s America failed economically.” International aid is unlikely; most countries have been unsympathetic, claiming that “if Notre Dame students don’t have enough money, then nothing will be enough.”

“Self-Love Week” is still ongoing. On Friday there will be a memorial Mass for the 317 students who passed in the great Duncan Stampede for free Chick-fil-A. Following the Mass will be a workshop for one-

person friendship bracelets and a talk entitled “Know Thyself: How Horoscopes Help Us to Love Our Ids.”



Image from Notre Dame Student Government Instagram

James Whitaker is a graduate student in the theology department. He has a cordial relationship with himself, but would be uncomfortable with the word “love.” To help build up his self-esteem, send your love letters to jwhitak5@nd.edu

ND Democracy Initiative Starts New Campaign

Espouses need to divorce democratic regimes from voters’ will

WILL GRANNIS

Staff Writer

Notre Dame’s Democracy Initiative unveiled its newest project on Monday February 3: “Silent Saints, Stronger States.” The campaign seeks to clarify why Christian voters have a sacred obligation to act indistinguishable from their secular neighbors when participating in democracy.

“We’re here to combat the alarming rise of Christian Nationalism, which we define as anything even vaguely resembling moral reasoning in the public square,” said Dr. S. Eculár, director of the Initiative, at the program’s kickoff in Jenkins-Nanovic Hall. “Democracy thrives when people vote their conscience—as long as their conscience has been properly secularized. If your faith informs your worldview, that’s fine—just make sure to leave it in the pews instead of the polls.”

The campaign’s kickoff

centered around a keynote address, titled “Why Voting Your Values is Tyranny (Except When We Do It).” Dr. Eculár began by explaining that voting for policies inspired by Christian morals unfairly imposes those values on others, but voting for policies inspired by secular ideologies is simply “advancing the common good,” since they represent the “neutral ground of universal agreement,” carefully curated by people who believe: that real communism has never been tried, that Kamala Harris was an excellent candidate, and that if Notre Dame sells off more of its Catholic identity it can achieve the same success as formerly Catholic schools like Georgetown and SLU.

For evidence, Neutral pointed to several key examples. “Take the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ That’s a value judgment. What if someone wants to kill without being judged? Are you really suggesting your ancient moral code should override their modern rights? This isn’t

the Middle Ages. Why should we expect those in power to decide claims about morality or truth? What even is truth?”

The highlight of the evening came when, following in the footsteps of the Vatican’s recent *Luce* anime mascot for the Jubilee year, the Initiative unveiled the campaign’s own anime mascot, *Neutrality Jesus*. Clad in a gray robe and clutching a ballot marked “Present,” *Neutrality Jesus* is meant to represent the ideal role for Christian voters. The campaign has also introduced its own line of crucifixes, where Christ crucified is nowhere to be seen and which are shaped like the Swiss flag’s cross, an international symbol of neutrality. *Neutrality Jesus* will be joined by a sidekick, *Compromise Peter*, who still denies Jesus three times but insists that it was just to avoid the Pharisees and Romans doing something even worse, like torturing and publicly executing Christ.

As part of the campaign, the Initiative is launching a voter training program to teach students how to remove personal conviction from political participation. Graduates of the program will receive Neutrality Merit Badges, awarded for accomplishments like avoiding tough conversations, dodging moral questions, and skillfully saying nothing of consequence. One student, who beta-tested the program, loved it: “It’s helped me find true peace. I used to try to advance the causes that I believed in. Now I can just feel vaguely uncomfortable when people ask me, a practicing Catholic, what I think on this, a Catholic campus.”

The Kroc Center for Peace Studies endorsed the campaign, praising the desire to make sure that no one takes a principled stand ever again. “True peace,” noted Center director Tapescrew Woodworm, “will only be achieved when we are finally able to stop talking about the true, the good, and

the beautiful.”

To critics claiming this campaign undermines Catholic values, Dr. Eculár offered a prepared statement: “That’s your truth, and we respect that—as long as it doesn’t involve voting, talking, or even particularly vigorous thinking about it.” Despite the criticism, the Democracy Initiative remains unfazed. Rumors suggest their next campaign will tackle other pressing threats to democracy, such as candidates who win elections being put in charge of the government.

Will Grannis believes categorically that all absolute statements, especially those about ethics, are immoral. If you want to send him a weakly-worded letter, he can be reached at wgrannis@nd.edu.



Who is Afraid of Moderation?

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2025 | 12:30-1:45 P.M. ET
JENKINS NANOVIC HALLS ROOM 1030

Open to the public | Lunch is available at noon

AURELIAN CRAIUTU

Aurelian Craiutu is Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Indiana University, Bloomington. His most recent book is *Why Not Moderation? Letters to Young Radicals*, from Cambridge University Press.

EVENTS HAPPENING ON CAMPUS:

Wednesday, February 12:

Humanae Vitae Lecture: "IVF: Manipulating or
Welcoming Life?"
(Debartolo Hall 116, 6:00 p.m.)

Wednesday, February 12:

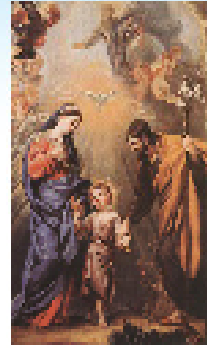
"Food for the Journey: Pilgrimage, Story, and Eating in
Babette's Feast"
Professor Jennifer Newsome Martin
(dCEC Library, Flanner 520, 7:00 p.m.)

Thursday, February 13:

"Who Is Afraid of Moderation?"
Aurelian Craiutu
(Jenkins-Nanovic Halls, Room 1030, 12:30 p.m.)

Thursday, February 20:

"What We Owe to Each Other: Embodiment, Flourishing,
and Public Bioethics"
Professor O. Carter Snead
(Eck Visitors Center, 4:00 p.m.)



HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC ADOPTION AGENCY

Holy Family Catholic
Adoption Agency
is here to assist
the Notre Dame, St. Mary's
and Holy Cross Communities
in proclaiming a Gospel of Life
by sharing the loving message of adoption.

Non-profit organization

For more information call (574) 307-3585

CATHOLIC? Pre-Med?

MEDCON 2025

WICHITA, KS

CATHOLIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
MEDCONQUESTIONS@GMAIL.COM



WANTED!

2025/26 Layout Manager



I want YOU to be
my new layout
manager

For further inquiries please contact
Michael Canady at
mcanady2@nd.edu

Get Your Merch!



Visit the official Irish Rover Merch Store!
Showcase your support of the Catholic character of
Our Lady's University. Orders are processed every
week, and your custom order can take 4-7 weeks to
ship after processing.

Scan for
some SWAG

